



National Military Family Association

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Celebrating Those Who Serve the Military Family

By Claire Lyn Saxon, Associate Director PR&M

Our nation honors military families each November during Military Families Recognition Week. The official observance has grown from a single day, when inaugurated by Mrs. Nancy Reagan in the early 1980s, to the current week which is extended to a full month at many installations.

The National Military Family Association (NMFA) expands the celebration by recognizing outstanding work done on behalf of military families. Policymakers in Congress and the Department of Defense (DoD); military family members volunteering within NMFA; and volunteers making a difference in military family communities worldwide will be honored and applauded at NMFA's Annual Meeting and Awards Luncheon November 16th.

The Board of Governors of the National Military Family Association, Alexandria, Virginia, has chosen three senior leaders from Congress and the Department of Defense to receive the Association's "2000 Support for Military Families Award" in recognition of their outstanding work on behalf of uniformed services families. This year's presentations bring the number of distinguished recipients of the award to 44 since its creation in 1984.

Chosen before his death to receive the award, the Late Honorable Herbert H. Bateman (Representative in Congress, First District of Virginia), Chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Readiness, is being recognized for his long-time, influential and key support of military families during his nine-term career as a member of Congress. His work focused on education of military children, the protection of the commissary benefit, and support of Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) issues. The award will be presented posthumously.

The Honorable Rudy de Leon, recently sworn in as Deputy Secretary of Defense, was selected especially for his work as Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness from 1997-2000. Secretary de Leon has demonstrated strong and consistent concern for military families with a special interest in the issue of education of military children. He is also applauded for his creation of the Defense Medical Oversight Committee (DMOC) to ensure involvement of senior Services leadership on health care issues.

The Honorable Charles L. Cragin, currently Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness, since 1998) and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs, since 1997) is honored for identifying and bringing to the forefront, the role of families of the Guard and Reserve. He was instrumental in the development of a National Guard and Reserve Family Readiness

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Strategic Plan, and in the establishment of the first survey of Families of Deployed National Guard and Reserve Component Members.

Kristy Hamby and Barbara Williams, two volunteers within NMFA, will receive the Novella Gibson Whitehead and Margaret Vinson Hallgren Awards, respectively, for their dedication to the Association's mission to provide education, information and advocacy on behalf of military families.

Kristy Hamby, an NMFA Representative now at Dover AFB Delaware, uses her boundless energy, enthusiasm, and dedication working to increase the size, scope, and impact of the Representative Program in order to broaden the worldwide impact of the work of the Association.

Barbara Williams' dedication to "showcasing" the limitless volunteer commitment in the broader Uniformed Services Community has been key to her plans and actions in re-invigorating the Association's Very Important Patriot award program. As the volunteer 2000 VIP Chair, she made an extraordinary contribution to the program's success by revamping the nomination and judging processes resulting in greater interest and participation by nominating agencies and program sponsors. The enthusiastically supported expanded VIP Program is expected to continue well into the future.

The VIP Program recognizes fifteen exceptional volunteers worldwide. Five Very Important Patriots (VIPs), five Award of Honor, and five Award of Merit recipients are chosen for their outstanding service which contributes to improving the quality of life in their military and neighboring communities. Active duty, guard, reserve, and retired members of the seven uniformed services; and their family members and survivors are eligible to receive the award.

Five Very Important Patriot (VIP) awards will be also be presented during this year's Awards Luncheon. Each of the five VIP recipients and a companion is flown to Washington, DC. During their stay in the Nation's Capital they receive a cash award, meet with senior leaders of their individual services, visit with their elected officials on Capitol Hill, attend the NMFA Annual Meeting and Luncheon, and meet the generous sponsors of the VIP Program.

The recipients of the five Very Important Patriot Awards are:

- Ms Cindy Whitney of Camp Keyes, Maine (spouse, Maine Air National Guard), the volunteer state coordinator for the Family Support Program (FSP), developed and implemented the Maine FSP, declared one of the best in the Air National Guard nationwide.
- Ms DaLisa Stearns of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (spouse, USN), rescued, restored, expanded, and manages the plant nursery turning it into a resource for the installation and its families.
- MSgt Mark C. Long of Randolph AFB, Texas (USAF), applies his leadership talents to the Texas Special Olympics program as committee leader, event manager, player/coach and mentor in addition to other humanitarian projects.



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- SGT Laura R. K. Jernigan of Schofield Barracks, Hawaii (ARMY), as part of her participation in many teen support programs, was instrumental in the planning and execution of the Warriors Against Drugs program helping teens stay off drugs.
- Ms Karen Comish of Schweinfurt, Germany (spouse, ARMY), initiated, and involved many volunteers in the creation and support of a Welcome Center for newly arrived military families, a concept which was implemented throughout several bases and is now the template of all USAREUR installations.

Information about the five recipients of the Very Important Patriot Award of Honor and the five recipients of the Very Important Patriot Award of Merit is included in stories on the NMFA website.

Additional information about the Annual Meeting and Awards Luncheon will appear in the December and January Newsletters issues and on the NMFA website.

The National Military Family Association is a non-profit, predominately volunteer organization with membership from the seven Uniformed Services, active duty, retired, reserve component and their family members and survivors. NMFA is the only national organization whose sole focus is the military family and whose mission is to serve those families through education, information, and advocacy.

Visit the association's web site, www.nmfa.org, for further information about the VIP Program and the National Military Family Association.

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